

THE INDYPENDENT

ISSUE #III, OCTOBER 26 – NOVEMBER 15, 2007
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

FORTRESS AMERICA

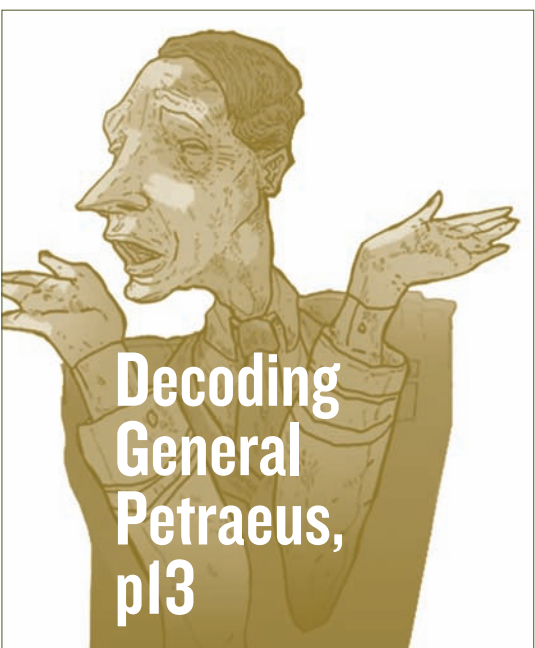
Welcome to the Arizona border region, a militarized no-man's land where migrant deaths are soaring as victims of globalization head north.

WALT STATON, P8
KARL W. HOFFMAN, P10

U.S. Border patrol agents detain a group of migrants in southern Arizona. PHOTO: KARL W. HOFFMAN



Repetitive
Reggae, p14



Decoding
General
Petraeus,
p13



Remembering
Brad Will, p6



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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 150 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center (IMC) is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Indypendent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write and distribute for *The Indypendent*, videotape events and rallies, update the website, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the editorial process.

VOLUNTEER STAFF:

Sam Alcott, Nicholas Allanach, Chris Anderson, Steven Arnerich, Eleanor J. Bader, Kazembe Balagun, Charlie Bass, Bennett J. Baumer, Lani Bouwer, Jed Brandt, Mike Burke, José Carmona, Niurka Carraasco, Kepfram Cauley, Matt Cavanaugh, Rahul Chadha, Susan Chenelle, Kristina Cyr, Ellen Davidson, Ryan Dunsmuir, Jeff Faerber, Renee Feltz, Leo Garcia, Anna Gold, Samantha Gorelick, Michael Gould-Wartofsky, Liana Grey, A.K. Gupta, Mary Heglar, Irina Ivanova, Gillian Kalson, Alex Kane, Ruth Kelton, Jennifer Klein, Jessica Lee, Jennifer Lew, Samantha Lewis, Virginia Lora, Gary Martin, Clark Merrefield, Ari Moore, Nik Moore, Ana Nogueira, John O'Hagan, Donald Paneth, Cat Perry, Louis Peterson, Nicholas Powers, Frank Reynoso, Anna Robinson-Sweet, Jeremy Scahill, Ann Schneider, Andrew Stern, Sarah Stuteville, Caroline Sykora, Gabriella Szpant, John Tarleton, Xavier Tayo, Erin Thompson, Dana Vindigni, Eric Volpe, Steven Wishnia, Amy Wolf and Rusty Zimmerman.

community calendar

Please send event announcements to indyevents@gmail.com.

The next editorial meeting for The Indypendent is Tuesday, Oct. 30, 7 p.m., at 4 West 43rd St., Suite 311. All are welcome.

SUN OCT 28

12-5pm • Free
4TH ANNUAL HALLOWEEN REALLY REALLY FREE MARKET. An open-air bazaar and celebration with free food, clothing, books, fun and more. St. Marks Church, 131 E 10th St (at Second Ave).

MON OCT 29

7pm • Free
MEETING: Planning for the Spring 2008 NYC Cuban 5 Organizers' Conference. Sponsored by Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban 5. Hunter College East Building, Ctr for Puerto Rican Studies, 14th Fl, Rm 1441 • 718-601-4751
freethecuban5.com

WED OCT 31

7:30pm • \$7-10
DISCUSSION: "NO! G8 ACTION – THE JAPANESE LEFT ORGANIZES FOR THE 2008 ANTI-G8 PROTEST," with Go Hirasawa & Sabu Kohso. Sponsored by New SPACE. TRS Inc Professional Suite, 44 E 32nd St, 11th Fl • 800-377-6183
new-space.mahost.org

THU NOV 1

6:30-8:30pm • Free
FILM SCREENING: "A LITTLE BIT OF SO MUCH TRUTH (UN POQUITO DE TANTA VERDAD)." The NYC premiere of this film on the summer 2006 popular uprising in Oaxaca. A collaboration between Corrugated Films and Mal de Ojo TV. The movie documents the people's takeover of various media outlets in order to coordinate the movement. Filmmaker Jill Freidberg will be present. St. Marks Church, 131 E 10th St (at Second Ave)
info@corrugate.org • corrugate.org

6pm-9pm - \$10/\$7 Lehman students
BENEFIT: "BLACKOUT: STOP THE JENA.CIDE W/Immortal Technique. Proceeds to Jena 6 Defense Fund. Sponsored by Lehman College Black Studies Dept, LEO, Amnesty Int'l & Club RAVE. Lovinger Theater, 250 Bedford Pk Bvd W, Bronx. • Contact: Lamont, 914-620-4708,

T'helah, 845-803-2520, Carla, 347-668-7109, or Student Life Bldg, rm 205A.

FRI NOV 2

5:30-8:30pm • Free
FILM SCREENING: "A LITTLE BIT OF SO MUCH TRUTH." See Nov 1.
100 Washington Sq East, Rm 714 • Photo ID required to enter building.

FRI NOV 2 THRU FRI NOV 9

ACTION: "JOBS FOR ALL WEEK." Organize local activities, educational events at community centers, universities & union halls. Informational picket lines & rallies at employment offices on 11/2, 1st FRI of month, the day the Dept of Labor releases unemployment figures. Sponsor: National Jobs for All Coalition. Info: Logan Martinez, Miami Valley Full Employment Council, 937-275-7259 • americassafetynet@hotmail.com • njfac.org

SAT NOV 3

12-2pm • Free
ACTION: "STEP IT UP" RALLY FOR ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE. Say no to coal and yes to green jobs! Rally with local leaders & activists, music, art & more. Volunteers needed. Washington Sq Park • volunteers@seaopeople.org
stepitup2007.org

SAT & SUN NOV 3 & 4

10am • \$10/\$15
CONFERENCE: "ANNUAL NE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE" featuring workshops, lectures, plenary sessions, performances and more by Anthony Arnové, Jeremy Scahill, Sharon Smith, Dave Zirin, Son of Nun, Melida Arredondo, Adrienne Kinne, Deepa Kumar, Yusef Salaam and others. Sponsored by Int'l Socialist Org, Ctr for Economic Research & Social Change, Int'l Socialist Review, Haymarket Books and Socialist Worker. Columbia Univ., Int'l Affairs Bldg, Altschul Auditorium, Rm 417, street level, 116th St & Amsterdam Ave • 646-452-8662
nesocialistconference.net



The NYC Encuentro for Dignity and Against Gentrification was held in East Harlem on Oct. 21. The gathering was organized by the Movimiento para Justicia en el Barrio and was attended by anti-gentrification activists from around the city. It concluded with children breaking open the Neoliberal Gentrification Piñata. PHOTO: RJ MACCANI

MON NOV 5

7-9pm • Free
TALK: "POST-CARBON CITIES" with author Daniel Lerch. Sponsored by Sierra Club NYC & NY Divinity School. John St Church, 44 John St • postcarboncities.net

WED NOV 7

6pm • Free
FILM SCREENING: "A LITTLE BIT OF SO MUCH TRUTH." See Nov 1. At Cantor Film Center, 36 E 8th St.

THU NOV 8

7:30 pm • Donation
PLAY: "ANTIWAR EXPRESSIONS: A poetic rhythmic journey from Queens to Borinquen to Baghdad." Written and performed by Ollin Imagination, with music by Amaru. Discussion afterwards. Trinity Lutheran Church, W. 100th St. and Amsterdam Ave.

6:30 pm • Free
TALK: "MONGRELS, BASTARDS, ORPHANS & VAGABONDS: MEXICAN

IMMIGRATION & THE FUTURE OF RACE IN AMERICA." Author Gregory Rodriguez examines the complexities of heritage & of the racial synthesis — mestizaje — that has defined the Mexican people since the Spanish conquest. Cooper Union Great Hall, 7 E 7th St (btw 3rd & 4th Aves). Info: 212-353-4158
jolene@cooper.edu • cooper.edu

THU NOV 8-THU NOV 15

Screenings: \$11 general/\$9 JCC & Symphony Space members
1ST ANNUAL "OTHER ISRAEL FILM FESTIVAL" showcasing the lives, images, voices & stories of Muslim, Christian, Druze & Bedouin Israelis with films, filmmakers, panel discussions, photo exhibits & more. At various locations • 646-505-5708 • info@otherisrael.org
otherisrael.org

Next Issue November 16.

reader comments

DEBATING THE WAR

Response to "Ineffective in D.C.," Oct. 5

From the title of this article I was under the impression that the D.C. march Sept. 21 had somehow failed. I'd say every single march shows just how many people really care — no matter how many show up or what Congress does in reaction.

—JPB

Response to "First Person: I'm Tired of Marching in Circles," Oct. 5

Americans are too consumed by entertainment and comfort to demand change. We think that this is good living. Why should we give up our minivans and HD TVs and Monday Night Football and once-a-week cooking lessons? The problem is that although millions of Americans disagree with our increasingly dictatorial government, they won't rock the boat. They're not willing to take the huge and irreversible step from protest to action. I don't know if I am. There's a lot to give up and it's difficult to do on your

own. When will the American condition be bad enough to inspire radical change?

—AGREE COMPLETELY

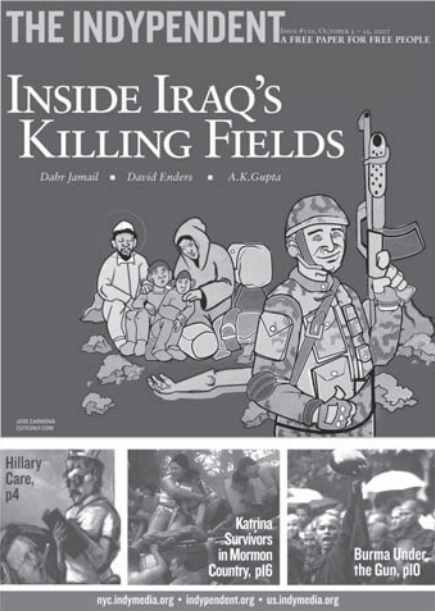
Responses to "The ABCs of Counter-recruiting," Oct. 5

I have been an active duty Marine for the past 10 years, and based on my experience, I can say that your article is completely dishonest. I can respect the fact that you are opposed to the war, but I cannot respect the fact that you are using lies and deceit to harm those who are serving their country and protecting your freedom. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

—RICARDO M. MELLOTT

Response to "Unembedded in Iraq: From Bechtel's Broken Water Pumps to the Battle of Fallujah," Oct. 5

Dahr Jamail, thank you for all you have done as one of the very few true reporters of the occupation. I have been blindfolded and sidetracked by both sides of the media em-



pires for so long that I refuse to watch any more television misinformation. ... There are around 40,000 deaths by gunfire in the U.S. every year.

—CYANFROG

Showdown at Columbia

After Years Under Siege, Students Take On “Islamofascism Awareness Week”

By MICHAEL GOULD-WARTOFSKY

First they came for the Palestinian professors. Then the Minutemen arrived on campus, gunning for the immigrants. In early October, someone hung a noose from the door of a black professor’s office. Following the slew of racial attacks at their university, a coalition of Columbia students banded together to pre-empt the latest offensive, which the right dubbed “Islamofascism Awareness Week.”

“We’re just a group of concerned students feeling equally angry, frustrated and tired of what’s going on,” explained Keondra Prier, a senior at Barnard and a member of Students Promoting Empowerment and Knowledge (SPEaK). “Certain people are tolerated on the campus while certain people are not. And it’s very evident as to who is and who’s not, and why.”

Set to take place on dozens of campuses across the country from Oct. 22-26, Islamofascism Awareness Week (IFAW) was hyped in advance as, “the biggest conservative campus protest ever ... a wake-up call for Americans,” according to the Terrorism Awareness Project, which is sponsoring IFAW together with the Young America’s Foundation. Between them, the sponsors

have ample funds in their war chest for such occasions.

The week was to feature petitions denouncing “Islamofascist jihad,” pamphlets like “The Islamic Mein Kampf,” plus purported “teach-ins” and “sit-ins” at Women’s Studies Departments, and speeches by the likes of David Horowitz, Ann Coulter, Rick Santorum and Daniel Pipes. The event’s sponsors urged their followers: “If you want to help our brave troops who are fighting the Islamofascists abroad — bring Islamofascism Awareness Week to your campus.”

“NOT ON OUR CAMPUS,” countered flyers circulated by the hundreds from Columbia’s Intercultural Resource Center, as students prepared to counter Horowitz’s planned Oct. 26 visit to Columbia. Many here saw Horowitz’s visit as an insult and an injury to a campus community still reeling from a noose hanging, racist graffiti and other racial incidents this semester.

“What it does,” said Noah Baron of Columbia Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), “is it builds on people’s fears ... And it makes it more difficult to discuss things that are already difficult to discuss ... racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, Islamophobia and things like that.”

Many students at Columbia did not

buy the rhetoric of “Islamofascism” in the first place — the term only gained currency after President Bush picked it up as a mantra in 2006. Rahel Aima of Columbia SDS sees it as a fiction: “Islamofascism is constructed ... [They say,] ‘We don’t like Islam, we think fascism is bad, let’s put them together’ ... And they’re like, ‘If you’re not with us, you’re fascists.’”

This is not the first showdown of its kind at Columbia. For years, the university, its faculty and its students have been targets of a relentless campaign driven by those close to Horowitz, an ex-leftist-gone-right (See sidebar).

The Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Culture (MEALAC) came under siege in 2005 for its pro-Palestinian professors. Horowitz, calling the university a “national scandal,” cooked up a blacklist of “dangerous” faculty. In 2006, the media villified student activists after they confronted the Minutemen on campus. And then there was the furor this fall around the Sept. 24 visit by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

With IFAW, Horowitz took on two of his favorite enemies: left-wing faculty and Muslim youth. In a recent statement, he claimed that “the progressive left is the enabler and abettor of the terrorist jihad,” and in the same document, he called the Muslim Students Association (MSA) a “front for the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.”

Nationwide, Muslim students and other advocates launched a rapid response to IFAW and the Horowitz offensive. The MSA announced a “Peace Not Prejudice Campaign.” As national organizer Asma



TAKING BACK COLUMBIA: A group of students are working to mobilize action against right-wing student activists on campus. Columbia University students (from left to right) John Beck, Kristin Wall, Noah Baron and Rahel Aima. PHOTO: CHRIS ANDERSON

Rehman put it, “The MSA is trying to reclaim the discourse from the hands of intolerant extremists who smear and distort Islam to further their own racist agendas.”

In addition to distributing flyers and organizing for a massive counter-protest against Horowitz, students at Columbia wore green armbands and T-shirts proclaiming, “Peace Not Prejudice,” and spread the message on online petitions, email lists and Facebook.

Ibrahim Ramey, Human and Civil Rights Director for the Muslim American Society, added that, in his view, countering IFAW is also about countering, “the longer-term political agenda of Horowitz and company to further consolidate American state power, military power and transnational capital at the expense of real democracy and social justice.”

As IFAW approached, many students still found themselves wrestling with how best to respond to the right’s offensive.

“While we don’t want all our actions to be reactions,” said Barnard student Aretha Troy at a coalition meeting, “there’s things that need immediate mobilization by the entire student body. There should be immediate solidarity where and when we need it.” Everyone in the room was nodding their heads.

Once a leftist, David Horowitz Now Plays for the Other Team



A New York City-born red-diaper baby and anti-Vietnam War activist, David Horowitz embodies the incoherent extremism often unfairly attributed to other once-radical baby boomers. “Islamofascists,” and their alleged supporters in the academy, are only his latest target.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Horowitz launched numerous salvos in support of his signature cause: destroying what he calls the left-wing “stranglehold” on U.S. higher education. Although a vitriolic opponent of affirmative action, he has advocated the political “re-balancing” of academia to better reflect the perceived ideological makeup of the country. The Southern Poverty Law Center has summarized the mission of Horowitz’s Center for the Study of Popular Culture as, “mak[ing] bigoted and discredited ideas respectable.”

—C.A.

Recent Academic Turmoil

By CHRIS ANDERSON

Over the past five years, perhaps no college campus has been the scene of as much controversy over academic “freedom of speech” as Columbia University in New York City. The reasons for this are partly geographical — Columbia is an Ivy League school in the heart of the media capital of the world, which inherently magnifies events there. Columbia can also be seen as an early-stage testing ground for the right’s campaign to cleanse the academy of “per-

nicious” influences. More than abstract principles are at stake in these recent Columbia free-speech dust-ups. Universities represent one the last institutional bastions of independent thinking in the face of a post-9/11 conservative ascendancy, and their subordination to a narrow political ideology would mark yet another victory for the right.



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. PHOTO: BLOG-CITY.COM

March 2003

At an antiwar teach-in, Columbia Assistant Professor Nicholas De Genova states that he hoped U.S. soldiers face “a million Mogadishus” in Iraq. Following widespread outcry stoked by the *New York Daily News*, University President Lee Bollinger claims he was “shocked” by the comment.



Joseph Massad. PHOTO: COLUMBIA.EDU

April 2005

Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Culture (MEALAC) professor Joseph Massad is cleared of charges that he made anti-semitic statements in his classroom by an ad hoc university committee. The David Project, a Boston-based organization that describes its mission as promoting “the truth about Israel” on university campuses, first leveled the charges against Massad in the winter of 2004.

February 2006

David Horowitz, calling Columbia University a “national scandal” in his book, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*, cooks up a blacklist of the school’s radical faculty.



Jim Gilchrist. PHOTO: OCBLOG.NET

October 2006

Columbia University students and community allies chase Jim Gilchrist, founder of the vigilante hate group the Minutemen, off the stage at Roone Arledge Auditorium. Once again, the local tabloids and conservative press are outraged. The University punishes student activists who organized the outburst.

September 2007

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is invited by Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) to speak as part of the school’s World Leader’s Forum. The visit prompts vigorous debate about the role of the University in promoting and moderating free speech. University President Lee Bollinger’s introduction of Ahmadinejad is widely condemned as bellicose and unbecoming of a university president.

October 2007

A hanging noose is found tied to the door of Teachers’ College professor Madonna G. Constantine, an African-American faculty member. Protests erupt. Hundreds of students march from Earl Hall to Teachers College. Many of the protesters call Columbia a “racist institution.”



A Wrench in the War Machine

Local Youth Think Twice about Joining the Military

BY JENNIFER KLINE

In a community church on Saturday Oct. 13 in Lefferts Gardens, Brooklyn, a group of 15 students from three local high schools began an abrupt, rhythmic chant in front of an audience of 70 people, many of them parents and teenagers.

With only the beat of a drum guiding them, the Bailey’s Café theater troupe began singing the refrain, “Freedom fighters, freedom fighters, freedom fighters. Where you at? Where you at?”

The refrain was an homage to members of Black Veterans for Social Justice, who had spoken with the high schoolers earlier in the year, and a powerful introduction to a series of vignettes performed that day by the students about race, the draft and military recruitment.

“They [military recruiters] don’t tell you that you’ll get PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) or your leg blown off or that you could die,” said Tabitha Cadet, a 17-year-old student at Paul Robeson High School and a member of the theater troupe.

The students’ performance kicked off an intergenerational counter-recruiting event organized by Prospect Lefferts Voices for Peace and Justice, a group founded in 2001 by community members in my Brooklyn neighborhood. We organize these forums to arm people in our community with firsthand stories from veterans and knowledge to help inform their perspectives on joining the military.

I got involved in the group more than a year ago because I was tired of marching in the streets without seeing any changes.

I have a cousin in the military and knew that if anything happened to him and I didn’t do everything I could to stop the war I would always regret it. Now, using counter-recruitment, I try to do what I can to directly disrupt the war machine by stopping young people from joining the military.

Our group speaks in high school classrooms, PTA meetings and career fairs, talking with students and parents about the “other” military that recruiters don’t tell them about. To students thinking of joining the military, we offer alternative ways to get financial aid for college, and find job training and apprenticeship programs. Whenever they can, veterans including members of Veterans for Peace or Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) accompany us to speak firsthand about their experiences of the military and war.

“A two-year-old girl got shot in the leg and she didn’t cry. She just looked at me like she was asking, ‘Why is this happening to me?’” said IVAW member Mike Harmon during the Oct. 13 forum. “I answered out loud, ‘I don’t know why.’” Harmon, 25, is a native Brooklynite who served in Iraq from April 2003 to the end of April 2004.

When asked by a community member whether his experience in the Army caused emotional problems, Harmon admitted to becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol after his tour of duty and revealed that he is currently on five different medications. He said he often goes into “funks,” but that the work he does speaking out against joining the military gets him out of “funks a lot quicker.”

One reason we organize forums is to initiate a dialogue in our community,

which is overwhelmingly against the war, and to continue to motivate folks to take action, whether it be in the classroom, in a forum or in the streets. But for me, the most important aspect is allowing young people and parents to see what people just like them are doing to stop the war.

During the question-and-answer session, Rodney Agnant, a 14-year-old student from Brooklyn Technical High School, said he notices that a lot of commercials for the Army are shown during television shows geared toward teens and asked whether Harmon thought the Army was intentionally targeting young teenagers. Harmon agreed that the military is targeting young people through TV and video games. Afterward, Agnant said that Harmon helped him “see more clearly all the subconscious ways the Army tries to get you to join.”

“You have the impression that the military is a good group, but that’s not always



true,” Angelica Ahmed, a 14-year-old student at Brooklyn Technichal High School, told me after the forum. “The recruiters promise lots of things but it’s not what you thought.”

For more information about Prospect Lefferts Voices for Peace and Justice contact: prospectforpeace@verizon.net.

A CHANCE TO STEER A STUDENT AWAY FROM WAR

You do not need a lot of people to do counter-recruitment. There are many ways you can get involved as an ordinary citizen, student, parent or teacher. You can reach out to a teacher at the local high school or bring a guidance counselor some information on alternatives to the military for the guidance office. If you want to work in group, contact a group that is already involved in counter-recruitment in the city. If you are a teacher or parent, the New York Collective of Radical Educators has a high school curriculum to complement the great counter-recruitment film, *Military Myths*, produced by Paper Tiger Television.

- LINKS {
- Paper Tiger Television – papertiger.org
 - New York Collective of Radical Educators – nycore.org
 - Courage to Resist – couragetoresist.org
 - Brooklyn for Peace – brooklynpeace.org
 - War Resisters League – warresisters.org
 - United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) – unitedforpeace.org
 - National Network Opposing Militarization of Youth – youthandthemilitary.org

WHY I’M A WAR TAX RESISTER

BY ERIC VOLPE

I am a war tax resister. I refuse to pay at least some of my federal taxes. Why? Because after years of examining the way things are, I can only conclude that it would be immoral and unethical to willingly pay taxes to the U.S. government, which spends billions every year on military campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan and countries

around the world.

I didn’t always feel that way. My parents were Nixon supporters (my father was a fan of Barry Goldwater), and I grew up in lily-white middle-class Hillsdale, in Bergen County, N.J. I wasn’t exactly a rebellious kid. I was raised to believe in the rightness and goodness of America, and I sure believed it. I hated the commies, and those hippy war protesters who were ruining America (I was born in 1958, so I grew up during the Vietnam era, but was young enough to miss the war). I was well prepared to be a patriotic American, but something happened — I grew up.

When the wars started, first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq, I went to antiwar marches, including the February 15, 2003, march, in which hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers protested the war. While I got a good feeling from some of them, I knew deep down that

marches, particularly legal, permitted weekend marches, do nothing to impede the machinery of war. It was at one of these early antiwar marches that I received a flyer about war tax resistance from someone from the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee (NWTRCC), an organization that provides information to those considering war tax resistance. It really got me thinking seriously about my taxes, which were going to fund these wars.

Although I first started considering tax resistance in 2003, I didn’t take any immediate action. I’m basically a law-abiding person who doesn’t want a lot of headaches — and tax resistance sounded like a major headache. But I also kept reading about the war. Finally, in 2005, instead of sending a check to the IRS, I sent a note explaining that I cannot send them money knowing what the money would be used for.

I send the amounts I owe to groups involved in more constructive pursuits. I have found that most war tax resisters that I have spoken with do the same, as they do not object to paying taxes as their share of the expenses in running society — it is paying for war we object to. Thus it’s not that we’re not paying taxes — what we are doing is diverting our taxes.

Now I’ll be the first to admit that my resistance is pretty token. Most of the taxes I “owe” are paid through withholding. I just refuse to send the balance (about \$100-

\$200/year). But, token or not, being a war tax resister is stressful. I get letters on a fairly regular basis from the IRS demanding payment, which really takes the fun out of checking my mail.

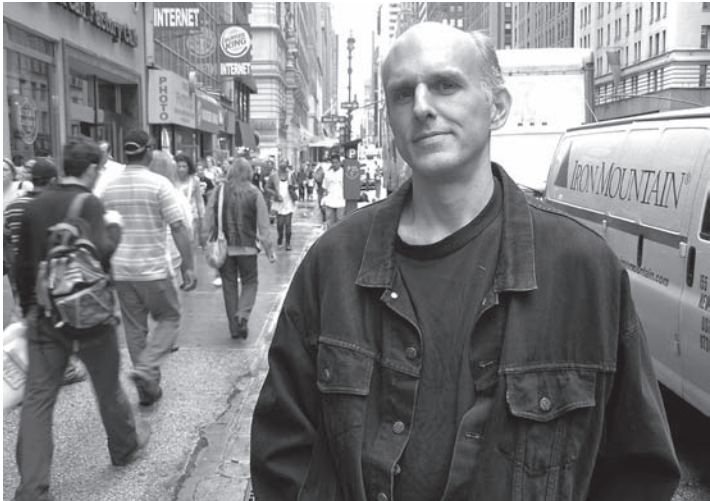
When I started this I figured the IRS would levy the amount they said I “owed,” including penalties and interest, out of my bank account; this is what happened to other resisters I had consulted on this matter. So far, after three years, this hasn’t happened yet, which means that small amount of money hasn’t gone toward buying more bombs and bullets.

But, some people ask, so what? When the government does decide to levy the amount I owe, they will get the money anyway, more after penalties and interest are added. I have certainly thought of this argument, and wrestled with it.

What it comes down to in the end is, that I want to be able to say if only for my own edification, is that I did not willingly act to further the execution of these wars.

If the government withholds my taxes, if they take my money out of my bank account, it is very difficult for me to stop them; but then the onus is on them; I will not have voluntarily assisted them.

For more information about war tax resistance, see nwtrcc.org.



To protest the billions of dollars spent annually on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Hoboken resident Eric Volpe decided to stop paying federal taxes two years ago. As a war tax resister, Volpe, a former Amtrak employee who is now a rail operations analyst, faces fines and the ire of the IRS. PHOTO: K. CYR

No Exception

Blackwater USA Scandal Underscores the Horrors of the U.S. Occupation of Iraq

By Norman Solomon

The Blackwater scandal has gotten plenty of media coverage, and it deserves a lot more. Taxpayer subsidies for private mercenaries are anti-thetical to democracy, and Blackwater’s actions in Iraq have often been murderous. But the scandal is unfolding in a U.S. media context that routinely turns criticisms of the war into demands for a better war.

Many politicians are aiding this alchemy. Rhetoric from a House committee early this month openly called for a better war at a highly publicized hearing that featured Erik Prince, the odious CEO of Blackwater USA.

A congressman from New Hampshire, Paul Hodes, insisted on the importance of knowing “whether failures to hold Blackwater personnel accountable for misconduct undermine our efforts in Iraq.” Another Democrat on the panel, Carolyn Maloney of New York, told Blackwater’s top exec that “your actions may be undermining our mission in Iraq and really hurting the relationship and trust between the Iraqi people and the American military.”

But the problem with Blackwater’s activities is not that they “undermine” the U.S. military’s “efforts” and “mission” in Iraq. The efforts and the mission shouldn’t exist.

A real hazard of preoccupations with Blackwater is that it will become a scapegoat for what is profoundly and fundamentally wrong with the U.S. effort and mission. Condemnation of Blackwater, however justified, can easily be syphoned into a political whirlpool that demands a cleanup of the U.S. war effort — as though a relentless war of occupation based on lies could be redeemed by better management, as if the occupying troops in Army and Marine uniforms are incarnations of restraint and accountability.

Midway through this month, the Associated Press reported that “U.S. and Iraqi officials are negotiating Baghdad’s demand that security company Blackwater USA be expelled from the country within six months, and American diplomats appear to be working on how to fill the security gap if the company is phased out.” We can expect many such stories in the months ahead.

Meanwhile, we get extremely selective U.S. media coverage of key Pentagon operations. Bombs explode in remote areas, launched by high-tech U.S. weaponry, and few who scour the U.S. news pages and broadcasts are any the wiser about the human toll.

With all the media attention to sectarian

violence in Iraq, the favorite motif of coverage is the suicide bombing that underscores the conflagration as Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence. U.S. reporters and commentators rarely touch on the U.S. occupation as perpetrator and catalyst of the carnage.

One of the most unusual aspects of the current Blackwater scandal is that it places recent killings of Iraqi civilians front and center, even though the killers were Americans. This angle is outside the customary media frame that focuses on what Iraqis are doing to each other and presents Americans — whether in military uniform or in contractor mode — as well-meaning heroes who sometimes become victims of dire circumstances.

“A real hazard of preoccupations with Blackwater is that it will become a scapegoat for what is profoundly and fundamentally wrong with the U.S. effort and mission.”

Many members of Congress, like quite a few journalists, have hopped on the anti-Blackwater bandwagon with rhetoric that bemoans how the company is making it more difficult for the U.S. government to succeed in Iraq.

But the U.S. war effort has continued to deepen the horrors inside that country. And Washington’s priorities have clearly placed the value of oil way above the value of human life. So why should we want the U.S. government to succeed in Iraq?

Unless the deadly arrogance of Blackwater and its financiers in the U.S. government is placed in a broader perspective on the U.S. war effort as a whole, the vilification of the firm could distract from challenging the overall presence of U.S. forces in Iraq and the air war that continues to escalate outside the U.S. media’s viewfinder.

The current Blackwater scandal should help us to understand the dynamics that routinely set in when occupiers — whether privatized mercenaries or uniformed soldiers — rely on massive violence against the population they claim to be helping.

Terrible as Blackwater has been and continues to be, that profiteering corporation should not be made a lightning rod for opposition to the war. New legislation that demands accountability from private security forces can’t make a war that’s wrong any more right. Finding better poster boys who can be touted as humanitarians rather than mercenaries won’t change the basic roles of gun-toting Americans in a country that they have no right to occupy.

Norman Solomon’s book *Made Love, Got War: Close Encounters with America’s Warfare State* (madelovegotwar.com) was published this month. This article originally appeared at fair.org.

Linking War and Warming



Antiwar and enviromental activists, dressed up as Blackwater USA mercenaries and an oil company executive, guard an oil rig prop in downtown Washington, D.C., temporarily delaying morning traffic on Oct. 22. More than 60 people were arrested during the “No War No Warming” day of civil disobedience at the U.S. Capitol, which was organized to connect the war for oil in Iraq to the issue of global warming. PHOTO K. CYR.

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WASHAW, AROUND THE WORLD
Exclusive Report by Jeremy Scahill, see p. 10

THE INDYPENDENT OCTOBER 26 – NOVEMBER 15, 2007 5

“We Are Fighting for Everyone”

TEACHERS UNION LEADER REFLECTS ON LESSONS OF OAXACA UPRISING

A VOICE OF RESISTANCE.
Raquel Cruz, of Oaxaca’s State
teacher’s union, in New York.
PHOTO: K.CYR

INTERVIEW AND TRANSLATION BY
JOHN TARLETON

When the governor of the Mexican state of Oaxaca ordered riot police to shut down an encampment of striking teachers on the morning of June 14, 2006, years of frustration with poverty and government corruption exploded into the streets. Thousands of locals joined the teachers, and by the end of the morning, the police had been run off. Ignoring Oaxacan Governor Ulisses Ruiz and his rubber-stamp legislature, the people of Oaxaca took control of the capital city and governed themselves over the next four months.

“It was unedited,” said Raquel Cruz, a primary school teacher and a leader in Oaxaca state’s teachers’ union who traveled to New York in mid-October as a guest of CUNY’s Professional Staff Congress. “The people organized. The people did everything.”

The rebellion in one of Mexico’s poorest and most predominately indigenous states captured the imaginations of millions, including NYC Indymedia journalist Brad Will, who was killed filming the uprising. On Oct. 28, 2006, the day after Will was killed, federal police swept into the barricaded city and crushed the uprising. Looking back a year later, Cruz shared her thoughts with *The Independent* on the past and the future of a movement that has been suppressed but is, by no means, over.

John Tarleton: What has happened in Oaxaca since the uprising ended in October 2006?

Raquel Cruz: There’s been much discontent. Neither the state, nor federal government, has complied with the agreements they signed dealing with social and educational issues, freedom for political prisoners and clarification of the cases of all those killed in the struggle.

JT: Describe the relationship between the teachers and the Oaxacan people?

RC: There’s a very close relationship between the people and the teachers due to Oaxaca’s characteristics. We are a state of rural communities, and this allows the teacher to remain in the community full-time. The teachers attend to many aspects — social, educational, cultural — of people’s lives. They also participate closely in the traditional celebrations of the people. This was one of the fundamental elements that strengthened the struggle from May to October 2006. The people supported the teachers and were with them at the barricades.

JT: How has the 2006 rebellion changed the lives of the women of Oaxaca?

RC: Women were the ones at the front. They were the tip of the spear. After a march where they were making noise banging kitchen implements, they seized the Channel 9 television station.

When the federal police entered the city

in October, women were on the frontlines and they had no fear. It changed the role of women in Oaxaca a lot.

JT: What can we learn here in the United States from the kind of social activism your union engages in?

RC: First of all, recognize that we live in a neoliberal state. In its politics, there is no consideration for what workers should receive. So we have to understand that we are all one and that we have our demands. In Oaxaca, we have persevered through 27 years of struggle. We are fighting for better working conditions and for a better quality of life — for children, for students, for the elderly. For everyone.

JT: How has neoliberal or “free-market” economics affected Oaxaca?

RC: In Oaxaca, it has been imposed and there has been a plundering of natural resources such as water and forests. Transnational corporations arrive and make theirs what belongs to a community. So the people of Oaxaca are resisting. The Plan Puebla Panama (see p. 7) is also important. All of this is a part of neoliberalism with its tentacles entering from all directions.

JT: Why do so many people emigrate from Oaxaca to the United States?

RC: There are no jobs. Tourism is a source of work but the main beneficiaries are the big hotels. Many people come here aspiring

to a better life. But, they leave behind their roots and the beautiful thing that they do have — the land. In Oaxaca, there’s much natural wealth. We have to organize ourselves and look for a way that our compatriots can return to their communities and have work.

JT: Talk about Oaxaca’s system of legal impunity. Our colleague Brad Will and dozens of others were killed in Oaxaca last year and yet nothing has happened even though there’s plenty of evidence about who the killers are.

RC: It’s known who is guilty of the repression. It’s the government. An investigation has been done by the International Commission on Human Rights. There’s evidence. There’s documents. Videos show exactly the moment people were killed. Brad filmed the final moments of his life. There are many people in prison for having been in the struggle but there’s no one in jail for having committed murder.

JT: How can we in the United States be of help?

RC: Your conditions are different. Your heads are stuffed with the idea of “work, work, work.” The human being isn’t a machine. The human being has to reclaim values that are human. This will strengthen solidarity. We need to experience the problems of others as our own, so when someone says something is happening somewhere, we don’t feel indifferent.

A Murder Not Forgotten

BY HARRY BUBBINS

Dear Brad,
Well, it is a year now since you were gunned down in the streets of Santa Lucia del Camino, Oaxaca, in southern Mexico, while filming an uprising against that state’s much-despised leaders.

In the first days after your killing, there were dozens of protests and vigils held all over the world including here in New York. Since then, Friends of Brad Will has evolved into a national network of activists demanding accountability through the arrest and prosecution of the people responsible for your murder. Jail may not be a solution, but something must be done.

We have been working with other organizations such as Amnesty International to pressure Congress to take a stronger interest in the human rights abuses that are still happening in Oaxaca. On March 1, some of us traveled to Washington, D.C., and met with members of the congressional subcommittee that guides U.S. policy in Latin America and confronted Thomas A. Shannon, the assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

Besides suit-and-tie lobbying and meetings, direct actions have taken place across the country including occupying a Mexi-

can Consulate in North Carolina, besieging Mexican officials at a fine Midtown restaurant and interrupting a recent book-signing appearance at the Union Square Barnes & Noble by former Mexican President Vicente Fox. As the Spanish-language daily *El Diario* noted, “While the ex-president preferred to center his discourse on Mexico’s democratic gains ... [and] personal themes like his love of God, ... the unresolved death of the U. S. journalist was converted into the focal point of the event.”

Although we are making progress with Congress on your case, there is a need for more grassroots resistance as the Bush administration pushes a billion-dollar “Plan Mexico” that would ramp up funding for Mexican security forces, lead to greater collaboration with corrupt local officials and introduce Blackwater-style mercenaries into that country. We are working in solidarity with a number of other groups to halt Plan Mexico and to mandate that any taxpayer aid to Mexico be predicated upon accountability for human rights violations, including your death.

Meanwhile, I can already hear you strumming a song about the paradox of working to secure justice through our war-mongering government’s official channels, as you once sang against government injus-

Remembering Brad Will

Brad Will was a New York-based independent journalist who was killed on Oct. 27, 2006, while covering a teacher-led social uprising in the impoverished southern Mexican state of Oaxaca.

Before his death, Will, a freight-hopping, guitar-playing activist, had spent years on the frontlines of countless movements from efforts to save squats and community gardens in the Lower East Side to engaging in “tree-sits” for weeks at a time high in the canopy of Oregon’s endangered old-growth forests.

Inspired by the militant, grassroots social justice movements that have flourished in recent years throughout Latin America, he first traveled to the region in 2002 and returned again and again with his video camera to chronicle and share in the struggles of the oppressed in various countries.

In February 2005, he was nearly killed when Brazilian police violently raided an encampment of 12,000 landless squatters who had occupied an abandoned industrial park. Twenty months later his luck finally ran out in Oaxaca. He was 36.

Will’s killing remains officially unsolved although published photos show gun-toting paramilitaries affiliated with Oaxaca’s ruling party firing in his direction moments before he was killed.

—JOHN TARLETON

tice at public hearings to stop the auction of our community gardens.

And one more thing. I have eaten baby greens from the sprouter you left behind, but where is your copy of the *Anarchist Cookbook*, just in case?

Harry Bubbins is a South Bronx community activist and friend of Brad Will since 1995. Please see, friendsofbradwill.org.





Lights Out in the Jungle

SOARING ELECTRICITY PRICES COMPOUND WOES IN RURAL MEXICO

BY JENNIFER TRUSKOWSKI

BENEMERITO, MEXICO—How much do you pay for electricity every month? \$50? \$70? Maybe \$100 or more if you have a huge refrigerator or use a lot of air conditioning in the summer? How much do you think a family living in a wooden hut in the jungle in Chiapas should pay? The Mexican federal government thinks they should be handing over between \$100 to \$400 per month.

On Oct. 14, about 150 representatives from 14 collectively-organized farming communities (known as “ejidos”) in Mexico’s southernmost state of Chiapas packed a warehouse in this town near the Guatemalan border to discuss soaring electric rates and alleged price-gouging by the government-run Federal Electric Commission (CFE).

Previously, these community members paid about 18 to 20 pesos a month (or about \$2), which corresponds to their rate of consumption. Most of them live in small one or two-room wood huts with roofs made of straw or sheet metal. Their electricity consists of one or two light bulbs hanging in the middle of the room. Additionally families may have a television and/or a radio. Since 2005, electric bills have been increasing.

At the meeting, copies of bills were posted on the wall. One bill showed that the customer’s electricity usage had mysteriously quadrupled and the monthly charge had increased to 1,523 pesos (about \$150). One recent news article recently claimed that bills have reached as high as \$479.

Several community members stood up and related similar stories of their electric bills skyrocketing to unimaginable sums. They explained that they couldn’t afford these prices, and that there was no way they had consumed so much electricity.

Guillermo Solis of the Red de Defensores Comunitarios (Community Defenders

Network), which is helping the 14 ejidos organize against the rate hikes, said his organization is coordinating with other groups statewide to respond to the problem. This way they will have more strength in numbers and be able to fight the system. He also explained that the scope of this problem is wider than just electricity; that their access to water, land and housing is also threatened (see sidebar).

The community members discussed various things they could do to address this problem. Solis suggested recruiting specialists such as lawyers and sociologists to investigate the situation. He also proposed that people engage in acts of nonviolent resistance like collectively refusing to pay bills until they reflect fair prices.

According to Solis, there are groups that give workshops to rate-hike resisters on how to connect and manage electricity should the government cut them off the grid for non-payment.

Augustín Soza Canseco, president of the neighboring municipality of Marqués de Comillas, also attended the meeting. He supported studying the situation while stressing the importance of remaining “objective.” He opposed engaging in resistance, however, saying there are other options, like negotiating with the government and turning to foreign resources, during which he gestured toward me, the only foreigner in the room.

Various women and men stood up and responded to him, complaining that their bills were too high, and asking what they were supposed to do in the meantime with these bills they cannot afford. Some community members suggested agreeing to a fixed monthly price for electricity, of about \$2-5 but that \$50 was too much.

Soza became visibly exasperated, and stated that he did not think that \$50 was too much to charge for one month. “We are doing a business here,” he said. At this point I wondered how much Soza’s monthly salary was. Surely it wasn’t the \$4-a-day minimum wage that many of the audience members are probably making.

Finally a committee was democratically

elected, and a rough plan was made to gather receipts and copies of bills from various community members as evidence of what was happening. From there they will decide the next step.

In the United States, it is vital that we understand why so many immigrants are fleeing from Mexico to our country, where they make more than half of the nation’s 12 million undocumented immigrants.

The battle over soaring electric rates in Benemerito is only a small piece of the reality that Mexico’s 25 million rural inhabitants are facing. While they struggle against neglect and government corruption, one of their most important sources of income is remittances from family members living and working in the United States.

If people want to do something about the growing number of undocumented immigrants entering the United States, they should be angry with the Mexican government, the U.S. government, which has fully supported Mexico’s misguided free-market policies, and the transnational corporations that have profited so handsomely from this situation.

That anger should be directed toward changing foreign and economic policy, not toward immigrants who are the first victims of a corrupt system.

PPP vs. People

Chiapas’ abundant rivers provide about 50 percent of Mexico’s hydroelectric power. These dams provide electricity primarily to wealthy urban centers and tourist resorts, while many poor indigenous Chiapans have no electricity or must pay inflated prices. Meanwhile, hydroelectric dams flood rural communities, costing local farmers and fishermen their homes and livelihoods.

Government officials use a variety of tactics to move rural people off the land: tricking them into signing contracts they can’t read, bribing them with government programs that are meant to divide communally-owned property, forcing small farmers to compete against heavily subsidized exports from U.S. agribusiness or making the land uninhabitable by polluting it with other large, industrial projects. Jacking up the electric bills of people surviving on a few dollars per day further adds to the hardships that have forced millions of rural Mexicans off the land over the past 15 years.

The government’s push to dismantle Mexico’s traditionally agrarian society is rooted in the desire to privatize land and resources and to provide a larger labor pool for the country’s sweatshop factories. In southern Mexico, the government is pursuing Plan Puebla Panama (PPP), a megaproject that would include a superhighway running from Central America through Chiapas and north to the United States and overland railways across the narrow Isthmus of Tehuantepec that separates the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean. Dams, factories, mining operations, single-crop agricultural plantations and other enterprises mostly run by transnational corporations would proliferate along these transportation corridors.

While the PPP’s proponents assert that its main objective is to improve the quality of life for area inhabitants, the plan itself was developed without any prior consultation with local communities. Since the blueprint for PPP was first unveiled in 2001, hundreds of organizations and communities in Chiapas and other southern Mexican states have formed campaigns of resistance to pressure the project’s supporters to engage in more sustainable forms of development.

—J. TRUSKOWSKI



Inside the Border Crisis

Migrants Risk Death to Cross an Increasingly Perilous Frontier

By WALT STATON, ARIZONA INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CAROLINE SYKORA

NOGALES, MEXICO—Six men sit in a row on wooden benches, their feet badly blistered after spending four days walking through the Arizona desert to enter the United States. Although they paid thousands of dollars for a guide, U.S. Border Patrol agents were able to find their group, apprehend them and deport them to Mexico.

The young men's story unfolds as Maryada Vallet, a volunteer with the humanitarian aid organization No More Deaths, begins to clean and bandage their feet in July. In Spanish, the men explain that they are from Veracruz, a state in southern Mexico that is rich in oil but poor in jobs.

Vallet is one of many who have given aid to the thousands of people who try to cross the border by walking through the desert, but were caught and deported.

She meets them at an aid station set up in a small dirt parking lot in Nogales, a booming border town that is divided by the Arizona-Mexico border. The spot overlooks a metal wall, which stretches through a deep ravine a hundred yards away. On the other side, U.S.

Border Patrol and National Guard troops keep watch day and night.

This group of men had tried to cross away from the watchful eye of U.S. agents, about 50 miles to the west where the desert is wide open and only an old barbed wire fence marks the international boundary.

Early in the morning, a helicopter had flown over them in the desert and began circling over their group, the men said. Some had run away, and their guide disappeared. Shortly after, migra, or U.S. Border Patrol agents appeared and took them into custody.

By that afternoon, they had been transferred to a bus, taken to a processing facility, put on another bus and then dropped off at the U.S.-Mexico border away from the city center of Nogales, where they are forced to limp back into Mexico.

"We had no idea the desert was like this," one man says. "It's the land of the devil."

Temperatures regularly exceed 100 degrees for days on end during the summer. On this day in late June, it was over 110 before noon.

Although their spirits were low, they were thankful to be alive and said they will try to cross again. Vallet explains how important it is to rest and let their feet heal.

She then asked if they had received food or water while being held in U.S. custody.

"Only a bottle of water," one man replied.



SOLIDARITY IN ACTION: Maryada Vallet, a volunteer with the humanitarian organization No More Deaths, bandages the foot of a recently deported migrant in Nogales, Mexico. The No More Deaths aid station provides medical assistance to thousands of undocumented migrants who are caught crossing the border through the Arizona desert and receive little or no treatment before being returned to Mexico by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. PHOTOS BY STEVE JOHNSTON

The forms are being compiled into an abuse report, which the organization hopes to have published by the end of the year.

For migrants, the abuse is just another obstacle that must be dealt with. After being deported, many try to cross again — as few have anything to go home to.

A CHANGE IN HUMAN SMUGGLING

A man with teardrops tattooed under his eyes walks by where Vallet has just finished treating the six men. She knows him, he spent the entire spring working as a humanitarian aid volunteer with No More Deaths after being deported from Los Angeles. Now he's a recruiter for a major human smuggling ring run by the Mexican mafia in Nogales. Since volunteers receive no money, the lure of big bucks from smuggling was hard to resist.

"We couldn't provide him with anything," Vallet said later. "He has to make a living."

Vallet asks him to explain the basics of the business.

A person who wishes to travel into the United States pays up front or arranges for a later payment from family members. They get a couple nights in a shelter in Nogales to rest. Then they are divided into small groups, each led by a guide. If they are caught, they get two more tries. Since the recruiters maintain a constant presence near the aid station, it's easy to reconnect with one's smuggler, or coyote.

She asks where they cross the border. He says Border Patrol agents and other U.S. officials have been paid off by his cartel, so most of his human trafficking occurs either close to Nogales or through official ports of entry.

The mafia only recently became involved with smuggling people across the border. As the U.S. border security is increasingly tightened, the prices have dramatically increased so much that a load of human cargo can bring as much profit as drugs.

"The mafia has always been here," Vallet adds. "They've been running drugs, using a fake business of importing cars. Now they're taking people, too."

From Nogales, it now costs approximately \$1,500 to get a coyote to sneak you across the border, he explains. If you're starting from further south, like Guatemala, the price begins around \$5,000.

The competition for business is fierce. Four coyotes were murdered at the beginning of September for recruiting on another group's turf. Photos of their bodies covered the front pages of the Nogales daily papers.

As the group of men from Veracruz talk about their next move, Vallet spots a bus dropping off another load of deportees a quarter of a mile north on the U.S. side. It will take them about five minutes to walk across the border and arrive at the aid station. Many just stare at their feet, as they are paraded in a walk of shame in front of hundreds of cars waiting to get through the United State's inspection station.

"It's a cruel game of catch-and-release," Vallet says. She tidies up her makeshift first aid area, and gets more supplies out of a storage shed.

"Until the U.S. ends their current policies of enforcement, until we start tearing down the walls instead of building them, it's just going to cause more human casualties."

Life afta Nafta

Since President Clinton promised that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) would help stem the tide of migrant workers illegally entering the country along the U.S.-Mexico border, "because more Mexicans will be able to support their children by staying home," the number of immigrants living without legal status in the United States has skyrocketed.

Between 1990 and 2006, the average number of undocumented immigrants living in the United States increased from 3.5 million to 12 million. By 2004, more than half of the undocumented immigrants living in the United States were from Mexico.

Following the passage of NAFTA, liberalized markets and the free movement of trade and money between the United States, Mexico and Canada helped push at least two million small Mexican farmers off their land, shifted workers to low-paying jobs in Mexico's notorious sweatshop factories and forced a record number of Mexicans to seek work in "El Norte," or the United States.

At the same time, the border separating the United States and Mexico has become increasingly militarized. In the 1990s, new policies such as "Operation Gatekeeper" in Arizona increased the number of agents and built walls in popular urban border-crossing locations, forcing migration into remote areas of extreme desert and mountain terrain in an effort to deter migrants from crossing.

In November 2005, President Bush announced the creation of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), the most technologically advanced border security initiative in U.S. history.

The program aims to secure all 6,000 miles of the Mexican and Canadian borders with a "virtual fence," that integrates U.S. Border Patrol agents, physical barriers, computer and communication

software, surveillance cameras and remote tracking systems, like radar and unmanned aerial vehicles. Private defense contractor Boeing Company landed the \$2 billion SBI-net contract in September 2006. However its pilot program to build a 28-mile high-tech barrier along a stretch of the Arizona desert is months behind schedule and has been riddled with system failures. Problems include cameras that cannot distinguish between grazing cattle, underbrush and people, and tendency to malfunction when exposed to moisture.

Frustrated by the delay and poor performance, the government has refused to pay Boeing at least \$5 million, while the House Appropriations Committee has voted to provide only \$300 million of the \$1 billion that President Bush requested for the program for next year. Since May 2006, President Bush ordered National Guard soldiers to the border to assist U.S. Border Patrol agents.

Instead of stemming the tide of immigration, however, this militarization has created a humanitarian crisis, where water, emergency assistance and a way out can be impossible to come by.

From 1995 to 2005, border deaths have doubled, with the majority of the fatalities occurring in Arizona's desert. According to No More Deaths, since Oct. 1, 2006, 238 immigrants died crossing the border in Arizona.

—INDYPENDENT STAFF

Toward a World Without Borders

By ONTO APORIA

What is a border?

First off, it's war. Literally, the border is a relic of the Mexican-American War of 1848, when America "bought" half of Mexico's territory (about 500,000-square miles) at gunpoint. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo still stands, marking the Rio Grande as the "line" which "separates" us from them. The border is a monument without a museum, doused with techno-media and military machines in order to revive its symbolism with a vengeance. Yet the war never really ended, only moving underground, in shadows, in stealth. Bodies still pile up at the edges, and governments still negotiate new treaties (trade agreements) all the time.

Through such agreements, the border becomes a form of property. It is enclosure, forming the body proper of the country, its outline, its image in the sand. Once this illusion becomes solidified in the minds of the citizens, its defense becomes unquestionable. Who wouldn't want to defend their property? The border becomes the consensual hallucination of an imagined community of "citizens" who share nothing but a relationship to what's "outside." We're not them, they say, those are 'aliens'. If to be an alien means to embody the subversion of their entire system of property, then by all means indict us! Property does not make the border possible, but on the contrary, the border makes all property possible. And with that, capital as well.

Property, we know, is theft. And theft, capture and control are the main functions of any state. Besides cops, prisons, and government buildings, the border is the closest thing

you'll get to the material manifestation of the state in all its naked force. The collusion between capitalists, militarists, racist libertarians and "pluralist" democrats to "contain the state of emergency", i.e., the loss of their profit, is blatant at every border site. Every "border zone" is chaos, and so the state tries to covers it up with a thousand bureaucracies, rules and technologies. The state tries to organize the chaos from above, but we all know how that goes: more resistance from below.

To contain resistance, the border becomes a prison. With 17 federal detention centers, hundreds of county ones and thousands of private ones, the border escapes its geography and encroaches inland. By the fall of 2007 the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will spend an estimated \$1 billion per year to detain more than 27,500 immigrants. ICE operates eight Service Processing Centers and seven contract detention facilities. Additionally, immigration detainees are being held in local jails and private prisons across the United States.

To guard this mobile prison, they need police. But how can the border also be a police force? By militarizing itself, and distributing the mindset of militarization to everyone it can. Everyone becomes a border guard, with ICE being just the last step in the long chain of control. Neighbors, colleagues, workers, friends — no one is safe. With a little help from the fear-mongering media, the virus of the bordermind sets in and spreads. Migrants — living in hiding, working in back-rooms — are killed coming in and killed getting out.

DECONSTRUCTING ALL BORDERS

How do we escape from this long border war? Where they have ideology, we must have Imagination. In some sense, we know the border is an imagined act, albeit an enforced one. To overcome this, we must imagine as well, and we must enforce our imaginations too. A world without borders is not a dream, it is how you live. Some say that migrants are the most victimized social class in the world. Others say that the global movement of migrants is the largest social movement in the world. Both are exaggerations, yet both are somewhat true.

Resistance doesn't begin at the fence because the border doesn't begin there either. Borders are massive investments, they are literally their own economies, and every economy, in the end, is based on debt, credit and the faith that everything will be paid back in full. Resisting the border means breaking that faith, that credit in the ideology of exclusion. This resistance is as layered as the border itself, and hence is inconsistent, contradictory and unpredictable.

From underground railroads to class solidarity, lobbying to strikes, boycotts to riots, childcare to legal defense, no-border camps to farmworker rights, the resistance is as open as the air. There is no "resistance" itself, only resistances which could link up to tear down, break away and immunize the border regime wherever it emerges.

This article was excerpted from a longer version published in the New York Rat, Issue #8, May 2007.

THE WAR ON IMMIGRANTS



The past two years have seen a dramatic change in government policy towards undocumented immigrants in the United States. As part of the Secure Border Initiative passed November 2005, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

(ICE) was given authority to confront the "problem" of 12 million people living and working in the United States without legal documentation. The department has led dozens of armed raids across the country — both at home and at the workplace — and the deportation of hundreds of thousands of individuals. As a result of the raids and detentions, demonstrations have erupted throughout the country in support of comprehensive immigration reforms.

195,000 Number of immigrants arrested and deported in 2006

510 4,383 Number of immigrants arrested in workplace raids in 2002; 2006, respectively

75 Number of ICE fugitive operation teams deployed across the nation by the end of fiscal year 2007

6,300 Increase in detention capacity along the Southwest border, by beds

26,000 The number of people in ICE custody on a daily basis

102 Number of U.S. cities that hosted immigrants' rights protests on May 1, 2006



Living on the Border

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY KARL W. HOFFMAN

Arivaca, Arizona—The border is not just a place; it is the thinnest line between the lives of human beings who are subject to different laws, yet share a culture that has blended together across a geographic landscape and a heritage which has intertwined for generations.

In a quest to document “the last American frontier as it vanishes before our eyes,” I moved to Arivaca, a small town seven miles north of the Arizona-Mexico border, in 2004. For the last three years, I have explored border communities and ventured into the vast desert on horseback, on foot and by 4-wheel drive, over some of the roughest terrain in the Sonoran Desert.

What I have learned and documented is not necessarily unique

to the American-Mexican Border. The movement of millions of people due to globalization creates a fascinating opportunity for documenting the cultural and humanistic facet of this era. We must try to understand the feelings of the people who want so desperately to improve their lives. Hopefully, this project will help lead to discovering solutions to border issues based on principles of humanity, instead of governments.

As we continue to build both self-righteous physical walls, steel barriers and high-tech surveillance systems, what we must see are the walls we have put up in our minds and in our hearts. These walls are the strongest of all, which each one of us has the power to either tear down or fortify.

Internationally recognized contemporary artist Karl W. Hoffman took time off from his gallery work in sculpture and jewelry to move to southern Arizona to complete a black-and-white photo-documentary of life along the U.S.-Mexico border. The “Living on the Border” project has been nominated for numerous awards in both art and photojournalism — nationally and internationally — and he has been invited to speak about his work and experiences around the country. For more information, see: livingontheborder.com and karlwhoffman.com.

© KARL W. HOFFMAN



TOP: The new border wall under construction is made of steel-pipe beams filled with concrete to foil cutting torches. It is 14-feet high and buried five feet into the ground. A wide dirt road runs alongside the wall to facilitate a faster vehicle response.

ABOVE: Young migrants caught by U.S. Border Patrol agents in southern Arizona after walking more than 25 miles through the desert.

RIGHT: Undocumented border crossers apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol agents approximately 15 miles inside the United States. In remote areas, detainees’ left hands are handcuffed together to hinder their chances of escaping.





Clockwise from above:

ARIVACA UNITES: Peaceful demonstrators gather to protest a surveillance tower built on a hilltop overlooking Arivaca.

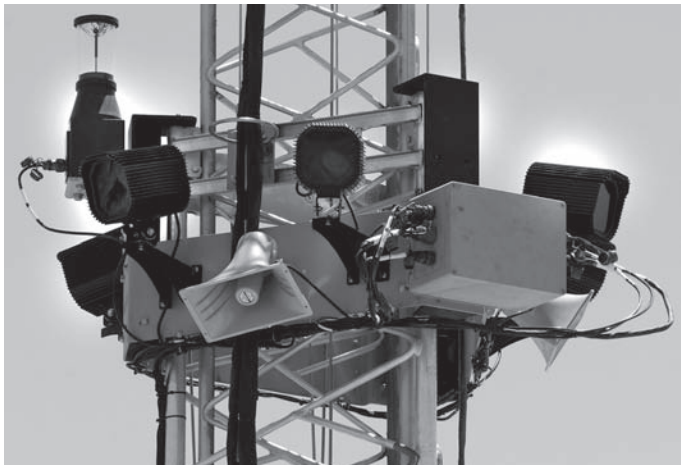
SHOELACES: Detained migrants are forced to remove their shoelaces so they cannot run or use the laces as weapons.

WHITE CROSSES: When a loved one dies entering the United States, the family hangs a cross on the tall steel wall that cuts through the city. We should all stand in Mexico before this wall and read the names and ages on it before we make our stand on border and immigration issues.

MILITARIZING THE BORDER: U.S. National Guard vehicles in the field ready for deployment.

BIG BROTHER: A midsection of a border surveillance tower south of Arivaca, Ariz. “Project 28” is a multimillion dollar system of surveillance towers, which are part of the Secure Border Initiative Network (SBINet), a \$2 billion national security contract that was awarded to Boeing Company in 2006. The towers are guarded around the clock by Pinkerton Government Services.

HOMELAND SECURITY: A U.S. Department of Homeland Security helicopter hovers over the southern Arizona desert.



Inside the Resistance

Meeting Resistance

DIRECTED BY STEVE CONNORS AND MOLLY BINGHAM
NINE LINES DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTIONS, 2007

Meeting Resistance is the latest addition to a pastiche of films that give a picture of what is happening in Iraq. Filmed in 2003 and 2004, mostly in a single neighborhood in Baghdad, it describes a generation of resistance against the U.S. military and explores how, within some months, civilian killings, torture and roundup operations by the military had created pockets of support for resistance operations.

In extended interviews, 10 members of the Iraqi resistance tell their stories, detailing why Iraqis are fighting the occupation. Some clearly have links to the former government; others have Arabist sympathies. Though none claim allegiance to the Ba'ath Party, some appear to have formerly held rank.

This is the first work created for American consumption to be composed almost entirely of interviews with members of the Iraqi resistance. While material concerning the viewpoint of the Iraqi resistance is available (mostly online), extended footage of fighters and other members is rare. The film importantly includes members of the resistance who have functions besides fighting, including communications and funding. Those hoping for close-up footage of fighters and attacks, however, will be disappointed. Some action sequences have been added, but these scenes speak more to the simplicity of anti-U.S. militants than their ability to blow things up, which, at the time the film was made, was considerably more limited. Civil war and sectarian and ethnic cleansing had yet to begin.

The film gives a sense of the breadth and depth of the resistance: members hold various ranks in Iraqi society and have varying levels of education. Little

Who the Devil is Vergès?

Terror's Advocate

DIRECTED BY BARBET SCHROEDER
CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE, 2007

Once asked whether he would defend Hitler, Jacques Vergès said, “I would even defend George Bush — if he pleaded guilty.”

Vergès defended Nazi Klaus Barbie, “the Butcher of Lyon,” in 1987, and proposed to defend Saddam Hussein in 2003. Now 82, and widely regarded by his peers as one of the foremost criminal lawyers of all time, Vergès is the subject of a new documentary by Barbet Schroeder.

Since his 1969 film *More*, Schroeder has filmed Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada and writer Charles Bukowski, driven by his sustained interest in “monsters.” Vergès is one of them: a flamboyant and enigmatic figure, famous for his defense of the indefensible.

“[Vergès] became a lawyer by accident,” says Lionel Duroy, a journalist for *Libération* who investigated Vergès during the Klaus Barbie trial. After taking part in the Resistance during World War II, Vergès was appointed to defend an Algerian female bomber (like in Pontecorvo’s film, *The Battle of Algiers*). “I understand the Algerians’ struggle, and I do not condemn their violence,” he said. Vergès called on international help to save his client, Djamila Bouhired, who became the face of the Algerian Revolution. Had she been executed, he would have shot somebody, Vergès said. Instead, she was pardoned, and he married her.

The outspoken young Communist lawyer became known for

his eccentric methods. Insulting judges, singing and waving flags, Vergès developed a dramatic persona. The son of a French father and Vietnamese mother, he was “born angry, born colonized.” Vergès used the court of justice as a tribunal and a stage to expose his anger.

Considering “[today’s] Palestinian is yesterday’s Algerian,” in 1968 and 1969 he defended the Palestinian fedayeen responsible for two El Al Israel Airlines attacks — and became the superhero for the cause of the oppressed. Vergès has said that for him, an acquittal is not the goal — rather, the goal is to expose the colonial crimes of Western nations.

Vergès’ full biography remains a mystery — he went missing between 1970 and 1978, during which time, rumors suggest, he joined Pol Pot in Cambodia, went to Vietnam, or acted as a secret agent for the French government. Schroeder’s rigorous investigation reveals Vergès’ involvement with Congolese dictator Moïse Tschombé. Vergès’ prolonged absence coincides with the emergence of Waddi Haddad’s international terrorist network, financed in part by a former Swiss Nazi, François Genoux, who supported the National Liberation Front in Algeria and Palestinian resistance movements, and is a close acquaintance of Vergès.

“Vergès’ trajectory grew ever more incomprehensible to me,” says the director, “but I always dreamt of knowing more about this character, whom I viewed also as a perverse and decadent aesthete.” Using archive footage and extensive interviews with the lawyer, his entourage and sev-

eral former terrorists, Schroeder does a fine job at rendering the complexity and the many facets of Vergès’ personality — that of a refined provocateur and great storyteller who loves the spotlight. Although Schroeder conceived it entirely like a work of fiction, the film is still both stimulating and destabilizing, neither denouncing nor endorsing the disturbing character it portrays.

Lionel Duroy says, “[Vergès] should have or could have been a terrorist.” In fact, the film reveals his ties with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — financed German terrorist “Carlos The Jackal.”

Ultimately, Vergès’ opacity could have jeopardized the film, the way an unfinished puzzle only answers part of the central question: Why does Vergès do what he does, systematically? It is clear from the beginning that his posture denounces both the establishment and the illusion of moral comfort given by the (necessary)



AKIKO KATO

trials of terrorists. However, his initial post-colonial stance wears thin. Little by little, we find out Vergès lost faith in political models. Resistance as a motif became sufficient. In the end, his unconditional support for all activity classified as terrorism justifies his nebulous involvement with Holocaust denialists and dictators of all kinds.

“What thrilled me most,” says Schroeder, “was the opportunity, through Vergès, to make a film about contemporary history, about our experience of the last 50 years.” Also the story of world terrorism told through this film, by one man who connects the dots, makes it a breathtaking thriller indeed.

Schroeder confirms that the last time he and Vergès met after the film was made, the infamous lawyer hadn’t lost his cynicism: “[Vergès] says that I am treacherous and he is my victim.”

—CLÉMENTINE GALLOT

focus is given to the mostly male interviewees’ lives outside of their roles as fighters. Only one of the 10 interviewed is a woman.

Many of the members use the word “Fedayeen,” a term formerly applied to some of Saddam Hussein’s elite units, and it seems clear that the group Bingham and Connors followed was created by a core of men who had previously fought together. These groups,

often supported from Anbar province, formed a nucleus for resistance in 2003 that grew as Saddam Hussein was captured and paraded on television. They had become increasingly widespread by April 2004, when major fighting in Fallujah began and the photos of torture at Abu Ghraib were aired. This was also the time that working around resistance groups became markedly harder for Western journalists.

But before that, as Bingham and Connor’s footage attests, it was possible. Footage of the martyrs’ cemetery at Abu Hanifa mosque, the bombing of the mosque during the war and the streets of Baghdad’s Adhamiya neighborhood offer a window into the months immediately following the invasion. Fighters interviewed in December 2003 speak candidly about torture in Abu Ghraib prison. Most journalists ignored accounts given by Iraqis of the torture taking place until the photos appeared on television

and in newspapers months later.

Even in 2003, Adhamiya was a dangerous place. The Iraqis interviewed are identified only by code names, and all the interviews but one are filmed out of focus, to prevent the images being used to identify the resisters.

These days Adhamiya is walled in by a U.S.-military-built partition, to prevent Shiite and Sunni militias from clashing. Residents of the neighborhood complain that the single entrance/exit there makes going out of the barrier dangerous.

“All the police have to do is watch that checkpoint,” one man told me, referring to government forces residents say are made up of Shiite militiamen.

The end of the film meanders a bit, with footage of Sunni militant attacks in Najaf and reference to the fighting in Fallujah and Najaf in 2004. This seems like a poor attempt to connect the group of interviewees to the following three years, in which the resistance grew and splintered. Some

engaged with Shiite militias and a few began working with the U.S. military. But in looking at the initial causes of the resistance, which this film does quite well, it’s not hard to think of a U.S. military exit as an imminent reality — life in Baghdad has become much worse since those Bingham and Connors interviewed formed their first impressions of the occupation.

Along with *Meeting Resistance*, I suggest viewing Michael Tucker’s *Gunner Palace*, which captures U.S. troops in the neighborhood at the same time.

—DAVID ENDERS

David Enders covered Iraq for Free Speech Radio News from 2003-2007 and is the author of Baghdad Bulletin: Dispatches on the American Occupation. Meeting Resistance is currently playing at Cinema Village.



GENERAL PETRAEUS' CORRUPT TEXT

The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual
FOREWORD BY GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, JOHN A. NAGL, JAMES F. AMOS.
INTRODUCTION BY SARAH SEWALL
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2007

Gustave Flaubert said his ambition was to write a book about nothing. Flaubert didn't succeed. Gen. David H. Petraeus and Lt. Gen. James F. Amos, authors of the new U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, have succeeded.

The manual, with a foreword by Lt. Col. John A. Nagl and an introduction by Sarah Sewall, is one of the most intellectually corrupt books I have ever encountered.

Without substance, it poses as a very thorough work, a hefty 419 pages. It examines, among other things: integrating civilian and military activities, intelligence operations, developing "host-nation" security forces, designing and executing counterinsurgency operations and leadership and ethics. There are five appendices: tables, figures and scholarly source notes, a glossary and an annotated bibliography.

But its use as a blueprint for success in Iraq is nil. For example, in a brief section on "social norms," it presents three paragraphs on culture, four paragraphs on beliefs and one paragraph on values.

"A value is an enduring belief," it declares, "that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is preferable to an opposite or con-

verse mode of conduct or end state of existence." For the U.S. soldier or officer that is a dead end. In two paragraphs on "Airpower in the Strike Role," it mentions that "bombing, even with the most precise weapons, can cause unintended civilian casualties" — a casual reference to a fearful consequence of contemporary U.S. aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Three paragraphs speak of "Multinational Corporations and Contractors." It is a very cleaned-up presentation of their activities. No numbers are given. For comparison, Oct. 4, 2007, the *Financial Times* (London) declared that "The number of U.S. troops in Iraq is now at a peak of 168,000, but they rely on an even bigger army of 180,000 contractors." *The New York Times*, in its own corrupt fashion, reported the number of contractors in Iraq on

Oct. 11 as "roughly 100,000."

The military material on strategy and tactics reads better. However, Petraeus' support in early 2007 for the troop "surge" seemed to conflict with the guidelines of his counterinsurgency manual, as *Current Biography* pointed out in a sketch of the gen-



eral in April 2007. "According to the ratios in the manual," the article reads, "a total of 120,000 troops would be needed to secure Baghdad, a number that would not nearly be reached with the 21,500 additional troops whose deployment [President George W.] Bush proposed and Petraeus publicly supported." According to some analysts, the manual's strategy hinges on convincing Iraqis to accept the occupation and violently separating the insurgents from the majority of the population — a strategy that requires a prolonged U.S. presence in Iraq, in spite of military commanders' opinion that present troop levels in Iraq are unsustainable.

The unwritten ratio that may be crucial is the "kill" ratio. How many Iraqi civilians must die to eliminate the population base out of which the insurgents operate?

The corrupt thought in the manual begins with its omission of an acknowledgment in honesty that the insurgency is a reaction to the American and British invasion and occupation of Iraq, actions which then U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared "illegal." The writers of the manual are professionally indifferent to the sufferings of the Iraqi and Afghan people under the occupations.

However, in her introduction to

the manual, Sarah Sewall, the director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a former Defense Department official, states forthrightly:

"[T]he new U.S. doctrine heartily embraces a traditional ... British method of fighting insurgency ... concentrat[ing] on physically destroying the unseen opponent embedded in the general population..." That is the point of view put forward in Sir Robert Thompson's 1966 book, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*.

Lt. Col. John A. Nagl, a member of the writing team at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, that produced the manual, offered another riposte or circumvention in the 2005 preface to his study, *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, "The United States is working diligently in Iraq, as it did in Vietnam, to improve the lives of the people."

Overall, and as of now, all the sweetness has gone out of American life, like the mythic cowboy disappearing over the horizon at the end of the film. Everything — politics, social and economic issues, war policy — has become bitterly contested and disastrous.

If the United States should win in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Somalia, and elsewhere, what will be left of America?

Nothing.

—DONALD PANETH

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Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.

14TH TO 96TH ST.
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Vox Pop
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Veggie Castle
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Ozzie's Coffee Shop
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57 7th Ave.

Verb Café
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Pillow Café
505 Myrtle Ave.

El Loco Burrito
345 Graham Ave.
243 Bushwick Ave.

Phoebe's Café
323 Graham Ave.

The Archive Café and Independent Video Store
49 Bogart St.

Pacific Street Library
25 4th Ave.

QUEENS
Terraza Café
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Café Aubergine
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Getting Off Misses the Mark

Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity

By ROBERT JENSEN

SOUTH END PRESS, 2007

My husband tells me that when heterosexual men talk about women in the locker room, the conversation reeks of sexism. His largely middle-aged comrades reject their intellectual and social equals — they argue that females over 30 are universally unattractive — and, instead, fixate on hot 20-somethings.

It's certainly possible that they are an aberration. But it may also be a clue to the magnitude of problems between the sexes.

University of Texas journalism professor Robert Jensen has been studying gender for more than 20 years and has been heavily influenced by legendary feminist activists Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon. Like them, he's a feminist who situates pornography at the center of America's penchant for violence and domination. And while many of his arguments rehash their work, he aims to make the men who consume porn aware of the messages they're absorbing, by challenging them to question why they are turned on by what they see.

Great questions. Sadly, *Getting Off* spends so much time chronicling the plots, subplots and depictions in individual pornographic films — Jensen has apparently seen them all — that issues of gender-competition and woman-hating get short shrift.

Jensen's solutions for curbing our culture's anti-woman biases range from the nonsensical to the bizarre: He wants men to feel guilt — but not shame — about their porn habits.

"Shame names the feeling that one is bad, while guilt describes the recognition that one has done a bad thing," he explains. "We need not reject the positive role of guilt, which allows one to see that an action is morally unacceptable."

Sounding eerily ministerial, Jensen thunders that men need to pursue the sexual pleasure that derives from deep intimacy between partners. Missing is the acknowledgment that not everyone wants a deep, long-term commitment, and that some of us are perfectly content to love 'em and leave 'em.

What's more, Jensen's worldview includes the "abolition of masculinity" — he goes so far as to write that he "chooses to renounce being a man."

It's absurd. Jensen has the right to be conscious of male privilege and can attempt to forge non-chauvinistic relations with women — but he's still male. In the same way that Caucasians can refuse to benefit from white privilege, a quick look in the mirror will reveal that, despite anti-racist politics, they're still white. Likewise, fighting sexism is about ending male supremacy, not forcing men to become genderless.

Even if you buy Jensen's pornography-as-prime-culprit argument, sexism is so prolific — from religious sermons to fashion magazines — that the argument is incomplete. Yes, porn's depiction of women — in Jensen's words, "three holes and two hands" — is often heinous. But the underlying issue of why men accept this portrayal requires a deeper understanding of the psychological and political forces that shape identity. Challenging sexism and misogyny requires men to own up to both their power and their desires.

That said, Jensen's reminder — if we somehow forgot — that men bear the brunt of responsibility for perpetuating female brutality and inequality is worth repeating. And analyzing why most men are threatened by strong, smart women is essential if we're ever going to have a healthy body politic. It also requires women to be assertive, pushing the status quo toward inclusion and respect. Porn may play a role, but it's at best just the tip of a large and unwieldy iceberg.

—ELEANOR J. BADER



LYNNE FOSTER

Reggae of Nostrand Avenue

Picture of Selassie

By KHARI KILL

OUTTA "D" GHETTO, 2007

Scale Down

By RISING APPALACHIA

UNWOUND RECORDS, 2007

Born in Trinidad, reggae singer Khari Kill is now a proud Brooklynite. The back cover of his *Picture of Selassie* album (Outta "D" Ghetto/Raptivism) depicts him in front of a Rogers Avenue bodega, and the disc's release was heralded by posters lining Church Avenue. He's touted as having "restored New York as a powerhouse in conscious reggae music."

That's an audacious claim, and a few cuts on the album live up to it. The standout is "Mary Grandson," about a ghetto youth selling ganja to support his grandmother who gets killed by police. With ticking bongo echoes and the bassline dropping in and out to heighten the drama, Khari Kill singjays with chant-down-on-Babylon fervor. "Dem a legal murderer/Who a charge 'em fe murder?/Me talking about the police and the soldier." He gets a similar flow going on "Jesus"

and "Top Ranking" — which rhymes with "go to school and don't do the dumb thing." Even on the lesser tracks, the full, pulsing bass and chinking, echoed-out guitar would make this a pleasing, uplifting headphone soundtrack for a sunny-day stroll down Nostrand Avenue.

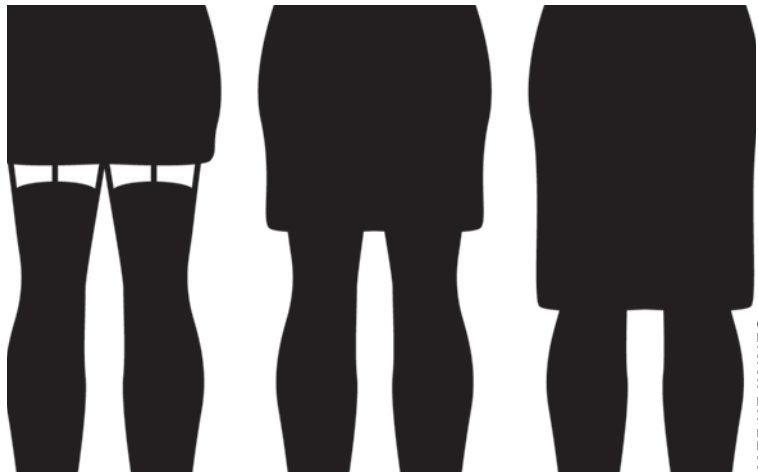
Over 15 tracks, however, it gets repetitive. The problem is that roots reggae, like rock, blues, and country, has a formula that's so well established that it's extremely difficult to avoid clichés — what can you do that Bob Marley didn't do 35 years ago? Khari Kill says "Selassie" almost as many times as Al Pacino said "fuck" in *Scarface*; the lyrics often recycle standard reggae lines such as "the battle is getting hotter," and the ganja paeans include the pothead T-shirt slogan "smoke and fly, don't drink and drive." I can understand the Rastafarian veneration of Haile Selassie — the first black head of state of the 20th century — as an I-am-somebody riff; "we were kings and queens in Africa" is certainly healthier than the self-hating nigga-nigga-nigga barrage that permeates much of hip-hop. But as Pam Africa of MOVE told a militant R&B singer I know,

she didn't want to be called a "queen" because, "if you have a queen, other people have to be subjects."

Overall, *Picture of Selassie* is the kind of album where I'm glad that downloading has emerged as a neo-45 form; there are a few cuts definitely worth having on it. And you might want to check out his soca-flavored material that isn't on the album.

If Khari Kill is music for Brooklyn Rastafarians, then Rising Appalachia's *Scale Down* (UnWound Records) might be music for dreadlocked white people in Asheville, North Carolina. It's spacy, medium-slow rhythmic acoustica, reedy female harmonies over ragaesque banjo picking and low djimbe thumps. I like the texture and mood a lot, but they don't vary very much. Though the album is occasionally leavened by an Irish-lament fiddle or a ragtimey-blues or churchy feel, over 60 minutes it gets samey. The most memorable melodies are on the traditional material, most notably a remake of "Give Me That Old-Time Religion" as "Old Fashioned Morphine."

—STEVEN WISHNIA



JENNIFER LEW

reader comments

Continued from Page 2

GM'S FLIMSY CONTRACT

Responses to "Auto Workers Get Shafted," Oct. 5

I am very concerned about how the worker's compensation costs (medical costs for injured workers) will drain the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) fund. Typically the employer bears the cost of worker's compensation insurance or is self-insured and pays the costs directly. However, employers are almost never sympathetic to injured workers and tend to dispute or outright deny company liability for the worker's medical costs, which then are shifted to the usual healthcare provider (insurance company) and the worker. These costs run into retirement more than the com-



JENNIFER LEW

pany will want to admit, I'm sure. How will the United Auto Workers (UAW) cover the costs of what is rightfully a work-related injury and the liability of the company? Will the worker's credit rating sink while the UAW also denies payment? Will the VEBA now pay the company's bills as well?

—KURT BARIKMO

I am an employee of General Motors Corporation (GM) and I voted against the contract; it's unfair and biased. It takes the responsibility out of GM's hands and puts it in the hands of the union. GM is in trouble because of GM, not the membership. This is a pot they have been stewing for years.

—JOHNEY LEAKE

UNNECESSARY ABORTION REGS

Responses to "Anti-Abortionists See Sonograms as 'Windows to the Womb'," Oct. 5

I work at an abortion clinic and we do ultrasounds to determine length of pregnancy. Most of our patients want to look at the ultrasound and they are actually relieved to know it doesn't look like much of anything; usually just a sac with a jellybean shape in it is how most of them describe it. So they can try to pass this law and maybe one or two girls will change their minds, but most of the patients that come to our clinic have already made their choice. I think they need to stop wasting the tax payers' dollars on another useless abortion regulation. They could put all that money toward educating people on safe-sex practices and birth-control methods. People are going to have sex; it's human nature. Let's give them the knowledge to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

—KEN

Please print a retraction stating that Dr. Ron Paul does not support using taxpayer money to force ultrasounds on women. He is a constitutionalist and would never support such frivolous spending. While he would encourage doctors to have pregnant patients do this, he would never use taxpayer money to do this. Your article makes it seem as if he is a part of this movement, this is not

the case. Dr. Paul wishes for *Roe v. Wade* to be overturned and for states to have the decision as opposed to the federal government. He does not support the federal government having anything to do with this decision unless it concerns defining life, which he believes begins at conception.

—JEFF

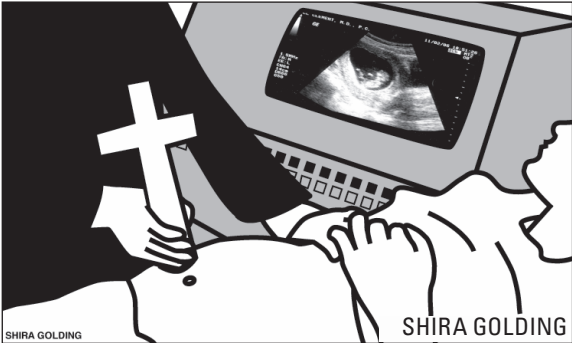
Many libertarian and liber-anarcos are singing Ron Paul's praises but he gives me pause. Whenever anti-racist groups show up at anti-immigration rallies (the New Jersey ones come to mind), openly neo-Nazi groups and the angry white guy crowd are Paul's biggest supporters. ... Not to mention that Paul, as Bader points out, is virulently anti-choice.

—ANONYMOUS

CORRECTIONS:

The final line of Eleanor J. Bader's article ("Anti-abortionists See Sonograms As Windows to the Womb") in the Oct. 5 *The Independent* was cut off. The complete final sentence should have read, "Time will tell whether the law will opt to treat women as capable decision makers or, like Ron Paul and Richard Land, will treat them like children in need of protection, mindless souls who know not what they do."

A photo from Jena, Louisiana, that appeared on Page 3 of the Oct. 5 *The Independent* should have been credited to Araby Smyth.



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2. **WHAT COUNTRY** in the Middle East agreed to be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and opened up its country to IAEA inspectors?

3. **WHAT COUNTRY** has the IAEA severely criticized for falsifying information on Iran's nuclear program?

4. **WHAT COUNTRY(IES)** has/have ever used nuclear weapons on civilian populations?

Ready for the answers? 1. Israel 2. Iran 3. The U.S. 4. The U.S.

The Bush regime "has drawn up plans for massive airstrikes against 1,200 targets in Iran, designed to annihilate the Iranians' military capability in three days," according to The Times of London, September 2, 2007. Bush himself is intensifying rhetoric accusing Iran of gaining nuclear capability, and refusing to remove the "nuclear option" from the Pentagon's Iran attack plans.

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1199/MLK Labor Center 310 W. 43rd St. 7th Floor
Thursday November 1st & Thursday November 15th 6:30pm

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